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The Cemetery for Foreigners

SOMETIME DURING THE REIGN of Kamehameha I, a small cemetery was established in Honolulu for the burial of foreigners. Although used in its early years for interring several notable persons, it was eventually abandoned and mostly forgotten.

Even the most basic facts about this graveyard have become hazy over time. The date it was created (1794? 1802? 1810?) remains controversial. A year for its abandonment (1900) has been reported but without any corroboration. Its exact location, said by some to have been on Pi'ikoi Street *makai* (south-southwest) of South King Street, is uncertain. Nobody knows, apparently, what happened to the remains of even its best-known occupants, Isaac Davis, Captain Charles Derby, and (maybe) Captain John Kendrick.

Kendrick, the master of the *Lady Washington*, was accidentally killed aboard his ship while it was anchored in Honolulu Harbor December 7, 1794: a shot fired in salute by the British ship *Jackal* "peirced [*sic*] the Side of Ye *Lady Washington* & kill'd Capt. Kendrick as he sat at his table. . . ." Kendrick's body was taken ashore for burial but was surreptitiously disinterred during the night to obtain the winding sheet (shroud).¹

Bishop Henry B. Restarick, the chief source for what little we know about the foreign cemetery, asserted in 1923 that he believed "that

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Kendrick was buried at the place where Captain Derby was interred in 1802 and Isaac Davis in 1810." Restarick reasoned that "if the chiefs designated a place for the burial of a foreigner in 1794 it is likely that other foreigners who died later in Honolulu would be interred in the same locations." Thus, he surmised, the graves of Kendrick, Derby, and Davis lay in close proximity to one another.² Bruce Cartwright, unwilling to make such an inference, concluded merely that "his [Kendrick's] remains lie hidden and forgotten near our waterfront."³

Captain Charles Derby's headstone, probably the oldest now standing in Honolulu, today is located in the small cemetery on Kawaiaha'o Street behind Kawaiaha'o Church. Derby, commander of the ship *Caroline*, died on O'ahu September 25, 1802, and was buried "somewhere on the plains east of Kawaiaha'o where the prostrate stone was found, but not the grave, by workmen clearing the land."⁴ Richard Cleveland visited the burial site in June 1803, later reporting, "I made a long excursion on shore, among the beautiful rural scenery in the neighbourhood of the [Whyteete] bay. In a retired spot, clothed with verdure and surrounded by cocoanut trees, my guide pointed to the grave of my old friend and former shipmate, Charles Derby, who died here last year, on board a Boston ship, which he commanded, from the Northwest Coast."⁵

In 1929, an unsigned note in the *Papers of the Hawaiian Historical Society* stated that Derby "was buried in a lot set apart for the interment of foreigners, situated at what is now near the corner of Piikoi and King Streets. When this burying ground was abandoned the tombstone at the head of the Derby grave was removed to the Kawaiaha'o churchyard."⁶ Photographs of the Derby headstone have been published on several occasions.⁷

The most noteworthy burial at the foreigners' cemetery was that of Isaac Davis, the English seaman who became a trusted advisor to Kamehameha I. Davis was rumored to have been poisoned by some chiefs in retaliation for having warned Kaumuali'i, king of Kaua'i, of a plot to kill him.⁸ According to John Papa 'I'i, "his funeral procession went from Davis' dwelling at Aienui to Kewalo, where his body was deposited on the land of Alexander, a haole who had died earlier."⁹ After visiting in November 1816 and again in September 1817, Otto von Kotzebue wrote: "In the burying-place of the Europeans, near Hana-rura, we read this simple monument on Mr. Davis: 'The

remains of M. Isaac Davis, who died at this Island, April 1810, aged 52 years.”¹⁰ In 1825, the Reverend H. Bloxam described the grave in these words: “The road to it [Diamond Head] leads to the picturesque village of Waititi, near which, a little to the right of the road, there is a small enclosed spot, where the remains of Isaac Davis, one of the first Europeans who assisted Tamehameha in the partial civilization of the Islands, are interred. . . .”¹¹

Not all persons buried at this location were famous. On June 27, 1821, Maria Loomis recorded that “The remains of the little orphan were deposited in the burying ground set apart for strangers about a mile from this place [the missionary houses]. . . .” The following January, Mrs. Loomis noted that “the corpse of the young man who died yesterday was carried past our house, and decently interred in the burying ground. This is the first instance of natives burying their dead after the manner of civilized nations.”¹²

These graves received relatively little care. In 1838, John Diehl, hailing the proposed establishment of Oahu Cemetery, wrote: “Thus the disgrace, which has so long attached to the revolting, not to say indecent, burial of foreigners at this port, in a common immediately contiguous to a public high-way, and entirely exposed to the intrusion of beasts, will, as we trust, be speedily wiped off.”¹³

Notwithstanding this pious hope, Davis’s grave remained in its original exposed location for ninety years. As late as 1923, Restarick could write, “Many now living remember seeing the grave stones of Derby and Davis at the place named until they were removed in 1900. They state that there were a number of sunken unmarked graves near by.” Bishop Restarick’s 1923 article was the first to locate the cemetery more precisely (“near what is now the makai corner of King and Piikoi streets”) and also the first to date the year of its abandonment as 1900.¹⁴

Davis’s headstone, made of “Chinese granite having his name and age upon it . . . was removed in 1900 and was unfortunately lost,” wrote Restarick in 1924.¹⁵ In 1998, Nanette Purnell stated: “Although Davis’ name appears on a family tombstone in O’ahu Cemetery, it is not certain that he is buried here. Documentation indicates that he was originally buried in an unnamed cemetery in Makiki, and that his ashes [*sic*] may have later been disinterred and scattered at sea.”¹⁶

Other writers have proposed still other locations for the cemetery

for foreigners. Glynn Barratt, apparently thinking of Makiki Cemetery, put it at the junction of Pensacola and Pi'ikoi Streets.¹⁷ Edwin North McClellan suggested the corner of King and Kewalo Streets, an intersection not evident on street maps.¹⁸

Documentation for the cemetery is singularly lacking. The date of its first burial, variously given as 1794, 1802, and 1810, is controversial. The cemetery was apparently too small to appear on any nineteenth-century maps. Its abandonment, thought to have occurred in 1900, went unrecorded so far as we know until 1923. Its very existence seems to have been ignored in listings of Honolulu burial grounds.¹⁹

A stroll past its alleged location fails to reveal any obvious traces of the old cemetery. Was Bishop Restarick wrong regarding its location? Has subsequent demolition and rebuilding erased all signs of the graveyard? A century has passed since its destruction. We may never know the answers to these questions.

NOTES

¹ Bruce Cartwright, "The First Discovery of Honolulu Harbor," *31st Annual Report, HHS, 1922* 23-25.

² Rt. Rev. Henry B. Restarick, "The First Clergyman Resident in Hawaii," *32nd Annual Report, HHS, 1923* 58-59.

³ Cartwright, "The First Discovery of Honolulu Harbor" 26.

⁴ [George Mellen,] "Eternal it flows . . .," *The Sales Builder* 13.3 (March 1940): 5.

⁵ Richard J. Cleveland, *Narrative of Voyages and Commercial Enterprises* (Cambridge: John Owen, 1842) 1: 232.

⁶ *Papers, HHS*, No. 16 (Oct. 5, 1929): 6-7. Also see "Broken Tombstone Only Relic of Lost Grave of Captain Derby," *PCA* Feb. 6, 1921: 2.

⁷ For example, in *PCA* Feb. 6, 1921: 2 and Robert C. Schmitt and Ronn Ronck, *Firsts and Almost Firsts in Hawaii* (Honolulu: U Hawai'i P, 1995) 79-80.

⁸ Rev. H. Bloxam, *Voyage of H.M.S. Blonde to the Sandwich Islands in the Years 1824-1825* (London: John Murray, 1826) 145.

⁹ John Papa Ii, *Fragments of Hawaiian History*, trans. Mary Kawena Pukui, rev. ed. Bishop Museum Special Report 70 (Honolulu: Bishop Museum P, 1983) 83, 85, 87.

¹⁰ Otto von Kotzebue, *A Voyage of Discovery in the Years 1815-1818* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1821) 3: 258.

¹¹ Bloxam, *Voyage of H.M.S. Blonde* 145.

¹² "Journal of Mrs. Maria Sartwell Loomis, Oct. 21, 1819-May 25, 1824" (typescript, HMCs) 121, 144.

¹³ John Diell, "Sketch of Honolulu, Oahu," *Hawaiian Spectator*, 2 (April 1838): 86.

- ¹⁴ Restarick, "The First Clergyman" 58–59.
- ¹⁵ Rt. Rev. Henry Bond Restarick, *Hawaii 1778–1920 from the Viewpoint of a Bishop* (Honolulu: PP, 1924) 20.
- ¹⁶ Nanette Napoleon Purnell, *O'ahu Cemetery, Burial Ground & Historic Site* (Honolulu: O'ahu Cemetery Association, 1998) 121.
- ¹⁷ Glynn Barratt, *The Russian View of Honolulu 1809–26* (Don Mills, Ont.: Oxford UP; Honolulu: Editions Limited, 1988) 235.
- ¹⁸ Edwin North McClellan, "An Early American Grave at Honolulu—Charles Derby," *HA* Feb. 27, 1928: 12, and "The 'Burying Ground' At Honolulu," *HA* Aug. 7, 1928: 14.
- ¹⁹ See, for example, the list in *P* Jan. 9, 1847: 138.

